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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

25 March 1980

MEMORANDUM

US-SENEGALESE RELATIONS

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The US has traditionally maintained warm relations with Senegal under the moderate, pro-Western leadership of President Leopold Senghor, who has governed since independence in 1960. Dakar's moderate foreign policies, which frequently support US interests, stem mainly from Senghor's fear of Soviet intervention in Africa and elsewhere. Senghor, who supports the Camp David accords and US human rights policies, would like to develop closer economic and military ties with the US, but not at the expense of jeopardizing relations with France, Senegal's principal benefactor.

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Senegal's most pressing problems are a burgeoning population, a stagnant economy, and weathering Senghor's planned retirement prior to the next election in 1983. Although the succession to Senghor may be marked by some political conflict, on balance Senegal's institutional stability should prevail. Senghor's successor almost certainly will not be as forceful a proponent of Western views on the international scene, but probably will continue to follow moderate, democratic principles.

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This memorandum, requested by the National Intelligence Officer for Africa, was prepared by [redacted] Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate for Operations, the Office of Economic Research and the NIO. Research for this paper was completed on 25 March 1980. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to Chief, Africa Division, OPA, [redacted]

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Senegal's Policies Under Senghor

Senghor's stature as an elder statesman and as a renowned poet-philosopher, his vigorous personal diplomacy, and his long-established relationship with world political and intellectual leaders give Senegal influence far out of proportion to the country's limited economic and military resources. []

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Senghor earnestly opposes Soviet influence in Africa and elsewhere in the nonaligned world, and his suspicion of Soviet intentions colors many aspects of Senegalese foreign policy. His diplomatic and moral support for Morocco in the Western Sahara dispute, for example, is motivated in part by his fear that the Algerians--by backing the Polisario--are acting as the Soviet surrogate to destabilize West Africa. Senegal is one of the few OAU members that still refuse to recognize the Soviet-backed government in Angola, and Senghor continues to support Angolan opposition leader Jonas Savimbi. Senghor views events in the Horn as further evidence of Soviet intentions to establish a predominant position in Africa. []

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Senghor has been mildly critical of what he sees as US reluctance to help friendly countries resist Soviet-Cuban intervention. The US decision to sell arms to Morocco and Washington's strong reaction to the Afghanistan invasion however, have reassured him. Senegal took a leading role in the United Nations debate on Afghanistan with a searing attack on the Soviet intervention. Last summer, Senegal agreed to US urgings to attend the Nonaligned Summit in Havana and openly criticized Cuban manipulation of the meeting's procedures and voting. []

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Senegal is one of a handful of African countries with a commendable human rights record. Senghor is using his influence to pressure the OAU into agreeing that human rights guarantees are as applicable to black Africa as they are to white-ruled South Africa. []

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In another reflection of his pro-Western orientation, Senghor has granted the US informal access to facilities at Dakar. American military aircraft have been allowed to use Dakar airport, for example during the airlift of men and material to Zaire's Shaba province in 1978. More recently, the Senegalese Government has permitted US naval reconnaissance aircraft to use the airport as a staging base for following Soviet ship movements. []

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A few of Senghor's policies conflict with US interests. Although he promotes dialogue between Israel and Arab states and probably would like to restore Senegal's relations with Israel, Senghor believes the Israelis should be more generous in negotiations with the Arabs and that the Palestinians must be given a greater voice in any negotiated settlement. In the North-South dialogue, Senegal is a vigorous proponent of more assistance from developed countries to the Third World. []

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Economic and Political Issues Affecting US Interests

Senegal's economy, plagued by unfavorable climatic conditions, depressed markets for its major exports--peanuts and phosphates--and a rapidly growing population, registered little overall growth in the last decade. Burdened with continual budgetary deficits, the country is dependent for survival on the largesse of France--the former colonial power--and international organizations. An ambitious economic plan launched last December aims to restructure the existing economic system by shrinking the government sector, opening Senegal to foreign investment, granting farmers more benefits, and removing price subsidies for urban consumers. Some of its more austere measures could lead to unrest, especially among the urban population. []

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Government officials are preoccupied with the succession issue. Senghor, who has dominated the country since independence in 1960, reportedly plans to step down before his term ends in 1983. He believes that this will enable his chosen successor, Prime Minister Diouf, to establish himself before the next presidential election. Diouf, who reflects Senghor's moderate, pro-Western views, has assumed the major share of day-to-day government responsibilities over the last few years. A reform-minded technocrat, the Prime Minister has not gained the complete confidence of leaders in the ruling party and the military and lacks a strong grass-roots base. He could face a serious challenge for the office from the more conservative old guard of Senghor's dominant Socialist Party or from the leader of the principal opposition party. Neither of these elements, however, would be likely to impose policies inimical to US interests. Moreover, the country's institutional stability and the general respect for constitutional procedures should help reduce chances for major disruptions. Senegal without Senghor probably will play a diminished role on the African and international scene, as any new leader will be preoccupied with domestic economic and social problems. As a result, the US may have to work harder to obtain Senegal's support on controversial international issues. []

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US Goals and Objectives

The bulk of the modest level of US assistance to Senegal--almost \$20 million in fiscal year 1979--is designed to promote economic development. Long- and short-term assistance is geared to increase food production, promote Senegalese efforts to reform the sagging agricultural sector, and upgrade the quality of rural life. The US also participates in multilateral projects such as the Senegal River Development Organization and the Sahel Development Program and trains a small number of Senegalese military officers. []

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The US is Senegal's second largest trading partner, exporting about \$40 million in goods per year to Dakar. US investment in Senegal also is modest--about \$25 million, with fixed asset investment mainly limited to petroleum marketing and phosphate mining. France remains Senegal's largest financial and military donor, foreign investor, and trading partner, although President Senghor has expressed a desire to expand economic and military relations with the US.

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